

should have been done by September 30. We are now well past that now.

On September 30, we passed a continuing resolution that went until tomorrow. Now we are passing another one that is going to go into February. As I read through it, as it just came over from the House of Representatives, and was scanning quickly through it when they actually released the language in it this morning, I was interested to be able to see a couple of things that popped out to me in particular, serving on the Homeland Security Committee. Serving that position in Homeland Security and some of the issues that we deal with on a day-to-day basis on oversight, I was fascinated to see two particular areas that popped out to me in this. One of them was dealing with unaccompanied minors.

The administration earlier this year took some of the COVID money that had been allocated in March and used that COVID money to deal with unaccompanied minors. We have yet to get a full accounting of how much that was. But then when the continuing resolution was passed just September 30, 2.5 billion with a "b"—2.5 billion additional dollars were allocated just to deal with the surge of unaccompanied minors for this year.

Well, that was a few months ago now. This continuing resolution is allocating another \$1.5 billion to unaccompanied minors. So they took we don't know how much money of the COVID money for unaccompanied minors, and then if this bill passes tonight, which I assume it will at this point, it is another \$4 billion just on the unaccompanied minors. Let me remind you how large of a figure that is, an additional \$4 billion.

Before we lose track of that, what jumped out at me first when I went through this was a surprising number. In the continuing resolution that just came over from the House just minutes ago, there is a request for an additional \$7 billion for Afghan refugees. When you say "OK, I understand," in the September 30 continuing resolution, there was \$6 billion for Afghan refugees over there. That is \$13 billion for Afghan refugees. The best that we can tell, we have 69,000 Afghan refugees who are in the process, and we are allocating \$13 billion for it.

Now, we all thought—and we had the conversation here—that \$6 billion that was allocated was an enormous amount of money that was allocated, but now, 3 months after the refugees started being able to move out of Afghanistan in that debacle of a withdrawal that happened, now we are talking about not \$6 billion but \$13 billion. That is around \$200,000 per person so far.

If that was not bad enough, in the continuing resolution done September 30, because of the enormous size of this amount of money and because of how little information has actually come to this body, there was a demand in it that by November 30—that was 2 days ago—the Department of Homeland Se-

curity would have to turn over a report of actually what is happening with the Afghan refugees. Has anyone in this body read that report from DHS now on how they are handling the Afghan refugees? I would go ahead and preemptively answer no because none of us have seen the report yet.

Here is what we don't know but yet this body demanded in the last CR to be able to get from DHS. We demanded to know crazy things like this: the number of lawful U.S. permanent residents who were evacuated out of Afghanistan. We don't have that number yet. We don't know how many were special immigrant visa holders. We don't know how many were actually applicants for special immigrant visas. We don't know the number that had any other immigrant status. We don't know the number who actually worked for our government who were actually evacuated. We have not been told although we demanded to have it by November 30.

We don't know the number of people who work for a partner government or any other entity that we were affiliated with although we asked for that. We don't know the number of people who actually came through the process and then were later determined to be security threats to the United States and had slipped through the process. We asked for that. We asked for that to come in by November 30. That has not been turned over.

We asked for the number of people who were getting paroled and their parole was then terminated because of some other criminal activity or something else. We asked for that. That is a number they have. They have not turned that number over.

We asked for even the number of interviews that had been conducted. We have yet to receive that. In fact, there has not been a single public hearing in the Senate on Afghan refugees—not one. So not only have we not received anything in writing, we have not even received any testimony from anyone from DHS on this.

Listen, we gave DHS \$6 billion and said: We are going to allocate this money to you. We just want to know who we are allocating it to and what it is going to be used for.

That doesn't seem unreasonable. But not only is this body not holding DHS accountable for not answering our questions, we are handing them \$7 billion more tonight. Does anyone else see this as an issue?

I am all for keeping the government open, but this body has a responsibility of oversight. We have pretended we are doing oversight, but we are actually not doing oversight—not a hearing, not a report, nothing. Thirteen billion dollars.

So, yes, I am going to oppose the CR tonight. I am not holding up the vote. I understand full well the responsibility of all 100 of us to put ourselves on the record. But if we are going to actually say we are going to do oversight, let's actually do oversight.

It is not unreasonable, when we all agree these are the facts and figures that should come from DHS to just tell us what is going on with the Afghan refugees, that we actually expect they are going to turn those things over.

So in the days ahead, I hope we will actually hold a hearing and actually get the facts. I hope we will actually demand that they turn over to us what we have required, and I hope we get a full accounting of how they are spending \$13 billion on what we understand were 69,000 people, most of whom have not even been moved in and across the United States yet—\$13 billion.

With that, I yield floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 438, C.B. Sullenberger III, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There being no objection, the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of C.B. Sullenberger III, of Texas, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate and that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all without intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Sullenberger nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, it is my hope that soon the Senate might be able to vote on a bipartisan agreement to keep the government open and funded through February 18.

I know both parties are working on that agreement right now. I wish those who are doing it good luck. I have certainly been working hard with the Appropriations Committee to help on that as have others. In fact, the only thing

worse than running the government under a continuing resolution, a CR, is a government shutdown. A shutdown only hurts the American people. We know last time we had one, it wasted billions in taxpayer dollars.

And with the agreement that I anticipate, I am glad that the bill will include critical funding to support Afghan refugees as we help them get resettled here in the United States. These brave women and men were our allies through 20 years of war. We have an obligation to support them as they begin their new lives.

I am not giving this speech as some kind of a victory lap. We are 2 months into the fiscal year, and we appear no closer to getting an agreement on full-year appropriations bills.

Now, if we vote on this, which I hope we will soon, we are buying time to complete these negotiations, and we have to complete these negotiations. It is not a matter of whether we should; we have to. But in order to complete these negotiations, we have to begin them. We have to have both sides represented at the table. My Republican colleagues, to this day, have not come to the table. I have been talking to many of them, and I am hoping they will because the American people deserve better than that from their elected officials. They expect to see both Democrats and Republicans sitting down negotiating—no matter how we vote in the end, that we are working on coming to something that will be voted on.

On October 18, nearly a month and a half ago, Senate Democrats released a comprehensive offer in an effort to jump-start these negotiations. We wanted to let all Senators—both parties but especially our Republican colleagues and the American people—know our values. Since then, it has been very, very quiet. We haven't heard any response.

Let me tell you about our offer. I believe the offer was fair. I talked with Senators across the political spectrum. We provided a 5-percent increase for defense programs compared to last fiscal year and a 13-percent increase for all other programs. I took that 5 percent because it is exactly the amount passed by a 25-to-1 vote by the Senate Armed Services Committee. It certainly is significantly higher than the 1.7-percent increase for defense proposed by the Biden administration, and the amount is lower than the 16 percent the administration proposed for nondefense programs, even though I would like that 16 percent. But it is called compromise. We took from one; we gave to the other. It is compromise. It is how you get things done. Nobody gets every single thing they want, even if you are chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

As I mentioned earlier, the 5 percent wasn't something I picked out of thin air. It was the exact amount contained in the fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA, that is be-

fore the Senate this week and again reported from the Senate Armed Services Committee. I think it was 24 to 1, but it was overwhelming.

The work on that bill has fallen due to Republican obstructionism over a series of amendments. To be clear though, none of the amendments Republicans are fighting for on the NDAA would increase total spending in the bill. That is because the 5-percent increase has bipartisan, bicameral support—Republicans and Democrats, both in the House and the Senate. That is the percentage they agreed to. Republicans unanimously endorsed the 5-percent increase when the NDAA was marked up in the Senate Armed Services Committee. And the 5-percent increase passed overwhelmingly in the House when they considered the NDAA over 2 months ago.

I have been here for 47 years. This is as close to consensus as we can get—unanimous and near-unanimous votes. So I have to ask, why not take yes for an answer? If I was a cynical person, I would think this delay was deliberate. If I was a cynical person, I would think this delay was meant to drive us into a full-year continuing resolution. If I was a cynical person, I would think that because some in the Republican Party have even expressed this desire out loud.

But for a party that claims to care about our Nation's defense, I suggest they do the math. A full-year CR would not only reduce defense spending instead of increasing it, it would reduce it by \$37 billion compared to the levels set forth in the NDAA that they voted for unanimously. Actually, it would cut defense spending below last year's level.

So stop the hyperbole. Stop the rhetoric. Deal with the reality. I have to ask those Republicans who are advocating for a full-year CR is their support for our Nation's security merely political theater? I hope not because what they are asking for is a tremendous cut in defense, not an increase.

But also I look at the nondefense area. The impact a full-year CR would have on American families in all corners of this country is equally unthinkable. Housing, education, childcare, critical healthcare programs—every one of these are at risk under a full-year continuing resolution. I can't possibly imagine that any Senator of either party is going to go home and say: Oh, I support huge cuts in housing, education, childcare, critical healthcare programs. I cannot possibly believe that is an outcome the other side would endorse, but that is what they are asking for in a CR.

Every week, it seems I receive letters from advocacy groups and industry associations—both those normally associated with Republican positions and those normally associated with Democratic positions—and they all say the same thing. They detail the problems that would come from the full-year CR and ask us to do our job and enact full-

year bills. Among those, they include the National Defense Industrial Association, the Aerospace Industries Association, numerous veterans groups—all groups we say we support.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that four of these letters be printed in the RECORD at the end of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEAHY. These four letters and others expressing concern can be found online at <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/download/advocacy-and-industry-group-letters>.

Let me be clear. Refusing to come to the negotiating table undermines national security and inhibits our ability to invest in American families, impedes our capability to respond to the coronavirus and what we now see as emerging variants—which I am sure the Presiding Officer hears in his State, I hear in my State, and I guarantee you in the other 48 States, every Senator is hearing about that concern.

But also there are 100 of us. We are elected to represent the whole country, 325 million Americans. We are elected to do our job. If we don't do it, it is irresponsible. That is the reason we are here today kicking the can down the road another 2 months.

Let's stand and vote yes or no on these issues. We have a job to do. The bill we will soon vote on, which I expect will be coming over soon from the House, gives us roughly 2 months to do it, and that is plenty of time.

But I would ask the Republican leadership to step up and engage, and I hope they will do it in the next few weeks.

I am prepared any day—any day, any weekend, any evening, any morning, whenever—if we could do this. Otherwise, we are going to be back here February 18, and the American people, no matter what party they belong to, are going to say: What are you folks doing? Where is this legislation?

So when the bill comes over, I urge my colleagues to vote aye on the bill, but I urge my Republican colleagues to work with me and with the House to ensure that we do not have to pass another one in February.

I have talked with Members of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. They will tell me privately they are willing to work, they want to work, and they want to get it done. I appreciate that, but now is the time to step up and do it. I think we can. I hope we will.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL DEFENSE
INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION,
Arlington, VA, November 1, 2021.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY, CHAIRWOMAN DELAURO AND RANKING MEMBERS SHELBY AND GRANGER: On behalf of the thousands of companies represented by the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) and across the defense industrial base, we write to request

the expedited completion of the defense appropriation bill. While we applaud the bipartisan effort to pass a continuing resolution (CR) and avoid a government shutdown, it is a poor stand-in for the full-year appropriations desperately needed by our warfighters and those who provide them with the equipment and services that enable their mission.

We cannot stress enough the importance of the defense appropriations bill to our national security and to a healthy defense industrial base. The limbo caused under CRs wastes precious time and money our nation cannot recover. Delayed new starts and initiatives place a strain on companies and their workforce, particularly as they recalibrate operations to a post-pandemic normal. Our nation's competitors face no similar challenges putting us at a competitive disadvantage, particularly with emerging technologies, and place our supply chains at increasing risk, something we cannot afford after the nearly two years of pandemic impacts.

Doing business with the Federal Government is already hard. The tomes of regulations, burdensome business requirements, sometimes Kafkaesque contracting and oversight procedures, and compressed margins have combined to drive businesses out of the defense sector with a net outflow of well over 10,000 companies since 2011 and, as noted in our annual Vital Signs report, a halving of new entrants to the sector between fiscal 2019 and fiscal 2020 alone. Add to that the uncertainty of "if and when" a full-year defense appropriations gets signed into law, more companies will reassess their participation in the defense industrial base. The ultimate price of this is paid by our warfighters who will lose out on innovations and new capabilities not delivered.

The inefficiencies caused by beginning 12 of the last 13 fiscal years without full-year funding have cost the military services billions lost in inefficient expenditures and program delays. Also, delayed contract starts challenge larger contractors while threaten the existence of smaller prime contractors and small businesses down the supply chain. The effect of that has a human face and a long-term impact. To execute a new-start contract, a company must recruit, hire, and train a workforce despite a tight labor market and a shortage of workers with the required security clearance. Faced with a delayed start, that company must now choose between two bad options, either pay that workforce to stand idle or let those workers go—both of which could lead to contract or business failure and undelivered capabilities to our service members.

With no full-year funding, we cannot afford to go too long without hampering readiness recovery efforts, delaying capabilities to our warfighters, and postponing investments in advanced technologies while allowing our defense industrial base to erode. NDIA supports a bipartisan agreement on domestic and national security spending and encourages the adoption of a two-year budget to prevent another year of budget instability and to provide the needed support to the Department of Defense for their critical missions.

We appreciate your attention to this critical issue and look forward to working with your Committees moving forward.

Very respectfully,

HERBERT J. CARLISLE,
*General, USAF (Ret),
President and CEO,
National Defense Industrial Association.*

ARNOLD L. PUNARO,
*MajGen, USMC (Ret)
Chairman of the
Board, National Defense Industrial Association.*

AEROSPACE INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION,

November 2, 2021.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER SCHUMER, SPEAKER PELOSI, RANKING MEMBER MCCONNELL, AND RANKING MEMBER MCCARTHY: The United States aerospace and defense industries are an essential partner with the federal government in an array of efforts vital to our economy and our national security. Each fall, that partnership is tested when those programs are slowed down or deferred by the use of multiple continuing resolutions (CR) to keep the government running. On behalf of our vital industries and our more than two million employees, the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA) strongly urges you to reach a near-term agreement on fiscal year 2022 funding to avoid further CRs beyond December 3, 2021.

Government watchdogs continue to document the waste and unnecessary disruption that CRs cause to federal programs. Multiple agencies advised the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in a 2021 report that longer CRs "contributed to distortions in agencies' spending, adding to the rush to obligate funds late in the year before they expire." The GAO determined that contracting officers working under a CR must continuously align the period of performance under their contracts to the specific timeframe of a given CR, resulting in many unnecessary contract modifications during the year. Hiring of new civilian staff is also delayed, making it harder for agencies to meet their goals. The GAO notes that agencies apply creative workarounds in the first quarter of each fiscal year, because they assume that appropriations bills will not be in place by the beginning of the fiscal year. However, these effects become far more serious, and agency staff have fewer options, when CRs continue into the second quarter and beyond.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is uniquely harmed under CRs because these bills typically prohibit DOD from starting new programs or activities or increasing any program's production rate beyond that of the current fiscal year. Both 'new starts' and rate increases are critical for our national defense because our defense posture and threats are always evolving. As CRs extend to longer periods during the year, this is an increasing problem for which DOD seldom gets relief. DOD reported to the GAO that between FY10 and FY20, they had requested exceptions to CR language (called "anomalies") 1,258 times and had only been granted three percent of those requests. Most of these requested relief from the prohibition on new starts and rate increases. We strongly believe that, should Congress produce CRs extending into the second quarter of FY22, it should eliminate the prohibition on new starts and production rate increases.

FY22 is the first year in a decade when discretionary spending levels have not been fixed in statute by the Budget Control Act. AIA has long argued that statutory caps are not needed because Congress and the administration are able to assess and address the needs of the nation more effectively, and with greater oversight, through the annual appropriations process. Last year, Congress enacted all 12 full year appropriations bills by December 27. If Congress fails to once again enact full-year appropriations bills, or continues running the government into 2022 under continuing resolutions, it will send the wrong signal to the government's partners, like those in our industry. We count on stable, reliable and adequate funding to support the critical capabilities that we provide for all Americans.

Like other industries, COVID-19 took a serious toll on our workforce and the thousands of small- and medium-sized businesses along the supply chain that are at the heart

of the aerospace and defense industries. More than ever, businesses across all industries need predictability and consistency.

We again ask that you ensure that all government programs receive full Fiscal Year 2022 funding on or before December 3, 2021.

Sincerely,

ERIC FANNING,
President and CEO, Aerospace Industries Association.

COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS,
November 24, 2021.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY: On behalf of the Coalition on Human Needs, I am writing to strongly urge you to do everything in your power to enact omnibus FY 2022 appropriations legislation including all 12 subcommittee bills, and thank you for your leadership towards this end. Our nation badly needs the increased funding provided in the Senate and House Appropriations Committee bills. We face many increased needs, a great many exacerbated by the pandemic and its economic dislocations. For more than a decade, funding levels for vital human needs programs have shrunk, especially taking inflation into account. If Congress fails to enact omnibus appropriations legislation and instead defaults to a long-term continuing resolution (CR) with flat funding, we will seriously damage our capacity to respond to the multiple public health and economic crises we face.

Members of the Coalition on Human Needs, including human service provider organizations, faith groups, labor, civil rights, policy experts and other advocates concerned with meeting the needs of people with low incomes, enthusiastically welcomed the funding levels provided in the Biden FY 2022 budget and the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. We have tracked nearly 200 human needs programs over the past decade. Between FYs 2010 and 2020, we found that two-thirds of these programs, covering health care, housing, nutrition, social services, education, training, and more, had lost ground, taking inflation into account. In the past year, we have begun to rebuild. But the needs are also growing.

We now face rising prices affecting necessities including utilities, food, and rent. Flat funding from a prolonged CR would fail our people by not providing needed increases in programs such as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The Senate Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Subcommittee-introduced bill increases funding by \$175 million. This is too modest when taking into account that natural gas heating costs are projected to rise by 30 percent this winter and heating oil is expected to rise by 43 percent; flat funding would be wholly inadequate. Nutrition programs will also need funding increases because of rising food prices. The Senate Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee proposal includes \$576 million for home-delivered meals for seniors, an increase of \$300 million above the FY 2021 enacted level. Responding to a serious increase in people experiencing homelessness, the Senate Transportation-Housing and Urban Development Subcommittee-introduced bill would increase Homelessness Assistance programs to \$3.26 billion, \$260 million more than FY 2021. These funds would expand services for homeless youth and people fleeing from domestic violence, and would provide additional permanent housing for chronically unhoused people. While the Senate Subcommittee bill would cover current rental voucher program costs, the House bill would expand rental assistance to 125,000 additional households. These increases are vitally needed. For the first 11 months of this year, median one-bedroom apartment rents rose 12.1 percent; for

two-bedroom units, the median increase was 13.2 percent. In the previous two years, median rent increases were less than 1 percent. Flat funding for housing and homelessness programs would be simply unacceptable.

We have for some time faced a substance use crisis, and have reached 100,000 deaths from opioid overdoses already this year, up from about 93,000 in 2020. The Senate funding level for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is \$9.1 billion, \$3.1 billion more than funding in FY 2021. Without this substantial increase, we will not be able to cope with the continuing rise in opioid addiction.

The pandemic has markedly increased mental health problems. From August 2020 to February 2021, the CDC reported an increase in adults with anxiety or depressive disorders, from 36.4 percent to 41.5 percent, and reports rose of unmet mental health care needs. The proposed SAMHSA funding levels allow us to respond more adequately. The Senate Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee proposal would increase mental health services overall to \$2.97 billion, an increase of nearly \$1.2 billion over FY 2021. In particular, the Senate Subcommittee bill more than doubles funding for the Mental Health Block Grant, to \$1.58 billion for FY 2022. The House-passed funding for Labor-HHS-Education makes a welcome increase in Children's Mental Health funding, stopping the inflation-driven erosion that caused a 14 percent reduction from FY 2010 to FY 2020. We must not return to flat funding when the pandemic has adversely affected the mental health of millions of children and adults.

Over the past decade, we allowed our public health capacity to diminish, and as a consequence we were not ready to cope with COVID-19. The Senate Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee appropriations bill increases the Centers for Disease Control about \$1.85 billion over the current year, allowing for the agency to rebuild so that it can more effectively respond to COVID-19 and future health threats.

We know our economy is hampered by a mismatch between jobs available and people with the skills to fill those positions. FY 2022 appropriations proposals include increases in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs (WIOA), YouthBuild, Registered Apprenticeships, and Reintegration of Ex-Offender programs, as well as a new National Youth Employment Program. These will lead to jobs with higher pay and broadly shared economic growth. These increases are needed to overcome a ten-year 17 percent reduction in WIOA programs and to move us forward.

There are too many important programs to list here. But we do wish to underscore that children have experienced many hardships during the pandemic, including unprecedented losses in education and alarming increases in reports of households with children sometimes or often not having enough to eat. The historic increases proposed in Title I K-12 education for students with low incomes and in special education funding are urgently needed to help children overcome the educational setbacks they have experienced. Title I spending rises by at least \$16.6 billion over FY 2021, and there will be a \$2.6 billion increase in IDEA state grants for more than 7.6 million students with disabilities.

The FY 2022 appropriations bills drawn up in the House and/or Senate include many important funding increases to help families care for their children. Funding for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program must accommodate an increase in benefits that was extended through the end of December in the current Continuing Resolution, and must not be allowed to expire at that time. In addition to the mental health,

housing, nutrition, and education funding already mentioned here, there are badly needed increases in child care, Head Start, early learning programs, and child abuse prevention and treatment programs. There are also urgently needed increases in funds to care for unaccompanied migrant children: at \$4.9 billion, a \$3.6 billion increase over FY 2021 in the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee bill.

The nation's recovery depends on strengthening a host of domestic programs that have been allowed to shrink for years, not just to get to where they had been before, but to respond to needs far greater because of the pandemic and its global economic dislocations. A long-term continuing resolution would be a severe failure to address these needs. We strongly urge you to enact omnibus appropriations legislation including all twelve bills as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH WEINSTEIN,
Executive Director.

— NOVEMBER 10, 2021.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER SCHUMER AND MINORITY LEADER MCCONNELL: On behalf of the millions of veterans our organizations represent, we write to express serious concerns about reports that the Senate is considering approving a full-year continuing resolution to fund the federal government for the remainder of fiscal year 2022, which would have significant negative consequences for veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors. Therefore, we are asking that you work together to ensure that veterans programs, benefits and medical services receive the full level of funding for fiscal year 2022 that was approved with strong bipartisan support (25 to 5) by the Senate Appropriations Committee in August.

As you know, Congress approved and the President signed a short-term continuing resolution (Public Law 117-43) on September 30th to fund the federal government through December 3, 2021, extending funding at the levels previously enacted in fiscal year 2021 appropriations legislation. Funding for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care and benefit payments for fiscal year 2022 was previously approved in December 2020 as advance appropriations in Division J (Military Construction and Veterans Affairs) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Public Law 116-260. However, the advance appropriations process only works properly if funding levels are adjusted to address increased demand for benefits and services as part of the following year's regular appropriations process, as is necessary for fiscal year 2022. Further, if Congress passes a full-year continuing resolution, all other programs, services and benefits would remain funded at fiscal year 2021 levels, which would fall short of the anticipated needs.

For example, a full-year continuing resolution could result in an estimated \$7 billion shortfall in funding for mandatory compensation and pension benefits, in large part due to an increased number of benefit claims resulting from congressional approval of new diseases related to Agent Orange exposure for Vietnam veterans.

In addition, the time it takes to process these and other claims for benefits would be significantly increased without the \$300 million increase for the Veterans Benefits Administration approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Similarly, reductions from the Committee-approved levels for the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the National Cemetery Administration would negatively impact veterans and their survivors seeking their services and benefits.

Enacting a full-year continuing resolution would also negatively hamper veterans' abil-

ity to receive timely medical care absent the \$3.3 billion increase for Veterans Medical Community Care approved by the Senate Committee. VA's critical Medical and Prosthetic Research programs would be cut by \$67 million and funding to support VA's health care infrastructure would be cut \$450 million below the levels approved by the Committee if Congress passes a full-year continuing resolution.

As leaders of the Senate, we call on you to reject consideration of a full-year continuing resolution that would reduce veterans' funding below what has already been approved in an overwhelming bipartisan vote of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Instead, we ask that you use your influence to ensure that the Senate completes consideration of the fiscal year 2022 appropriations so that veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors have timely access to all the benefits, services and medical care they have earned.

Respectfully,

LAWRENCE W. MONTREUIL,
*National Legislative
Director, The Amer-
ican Legion.*

JOY J. LLEM,
*National Legislative
Director, DAV (Dis-
abled American Vet-
erans).*

TOM PORTER,
*Executive Vice Presi-
dent, Government
Affairs, Iraq and Af-
ghanistan Veterans
of America.*

HEATHER ANSLEY, ESQ.,
MSW,
*Associate Executive
Director of Govern-
ment Relations, Par-
alyzed Veterans of
America.*

PATRICK MURRAY,
*Director, National
Legislative Service,
Veterans of Foreign
Wars.*

DAN MERRY,
*Colonel, USAF (Ret),
Vice President for
Government Rela-
tions, Military Offi-
cers Association of
America.*

SHARON HODGE,
*Director for Policy and
Government Affairs,
Vietnam Veterans of
America.*

BRIAN DEMPSEY,
*Government Affairs
Director, Wounded
Warrior Project.*

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 6119

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6119, which was received from the House and is at the desk; that the only

amendment in order be Marshall-Lee No. 4868; that Senator LEE be recognized to speak for up to 10 minutes and that, following his remarks, the Senate vote on the Marshall amendment; that upon disposition of the Marshall amendment, the bill shall be considered read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, if amended, with 60 affirmative votes required for passage; that there be 6 minutes for debate equally divided in the usual form prior to each vote, all without further intervening action or debate.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I am pleased to announce that an agreement has been reached between Democrats and Republicans that will allow the Senate to take up and pass the continuing resolution to fund the government through February 18. With this agreement, there will be no government shutdown, and I appreciate the work of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle, including Leader McCONNELL, to reach this point. The good, bipartisan work that produced this agreement will give appropriators in both parties and in both Chambers time to reach a comprehensive agreement on appropriations by February 18 of next year.

I am glad that, in the end, cooler heads prevailed. The government will stay open. I thank the Members of this Chamber for walking us back from the brink of an avoidable, needless, and costly shutdown.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

FURTHER EXTENDING GOVERNMENT FUNDING ACT

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session and proceed to the consideration of H.R. 6119, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6119) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

AMENDMENT NO. 4868

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, 45 million Americans, 45 million hard-working moms and dads, neighbors, and friends are being threatened right now with

losing their jobs. They are being threatened not due to cyclical economic conditions, not because jobs aren't available, not because of some war or other calamity; their jobs are being threatened by their own government—a government that has chosen to tell them if they don't comply with a Presidential medical orthodoxy, they will be fired.

This is unfortunate. This is most unfortunate. It is most unfortunate that this power has been exercised this way. The President doesn't have that power. Congress hasn't given the President that power. Congress doesn't have that power to begin with. This is not a power that belongs in the Federal Government to begin with.

As a result of that, 45 million Americans are being threatened with their jobs. They are being forced to choose between an unwanted medical procedure and losing their job.

Look, I want to be very clear. I have been vaccinated. My family has been vaccinated. I believe the development of the vaccine is something of a modern medical miracle. I am grateful for the vaccine. I think the vaccine is helping Americans be safe from the effects of COVID. It is not the government's job. It is not within government's authority to tell people that they must be vaccinated, and if they don't get vaccinated, they will get fired.

It is wrong. It is immoral. You don't tell someone that if they don't do exactly what you want them to do, that they are going to lose their job. The American people overwhelmingly agree.

In fact, according to a recent Axios poll, only 14 percent of all Americans agree with the President of the United States that if someone declines to get the jab, they should lose their job.

Now, this is a huge percentage of the workforce in many States—most States, in fact. Somewhere between a quarter and a third of all workers are now being faced with the possibility of losing their job because of these vaccine mandates. This, at a time when Americans are struggling just to put food on the table, in part, because we have a government that is spending too much money it doesn't have.

It is churning up money, printing it, in effect, in a way that results in rampant inflation; in a way that makes limited paychecks go less far, less capable of buying bread to put on the table. And amidst all of this government-manufactured crisis, government is making it worse; threatening to not just make that paycheck go even less far than it already does because of government but to take it away altogether. That is not kind; that is not the neighborly way in which we like to do things; it is not moral; and it is not constitutional.

Look, it is tragic that this many Americans have to have their jobs threatened as a result of a Presidential temper tantrum. There is nothing about it that is OK. Deep down, we all know that it is not OK.

I will tell you, there is another thing that is not OK. It is not OK that those who want to take away those jobs, those who are just fine with the President exercising this authority fought tooth and nail to prevent the U.S. Senate from taking the vote that we are preparing to take tonight, a simple vote—a simple vote that simply allows us to weigh in and decide whether or not we are going to fund that part of government, that feature of our government that is going to enforce the vaccine mandate.

Those in this Chamber who shamefully were refusing over and over again to let us even cast a vote on that simple measure threatened to shut down all of government because they didn't want to have us have a chance, as the people's elected lawmakers, to decide whether or not we should proceed with vaccine mandate enforcement. They would rather shut down the government and make everything worse than they would stand accountable for what they are doing.

Fortunately, this part of the story at least has a happy ending. We are going to be able to vote on that tonight. We are going to be able to vote on whether or not we fund vaccine mandate enforcement at the Federal level.

This is wonderful. This is fantastic. It should not have resulted in days and days of shutdown threats and days and days of deflection, accusing other people of wanting to shut down the government when all we wanted to do was have a vote, to give a chance to the hard-working mom or dad, soldier, sailor, airman, or marine struggling to put food on the table. That is all we wanted. And all they wanted to do is use it as an excuse to deflect onto others that which they are doing.

We can do better than this. We must do better than this. The American people deserve better than this. That is why I am so glad and grateful that we will be casting this vote tonight.

But know this: This issue is not going away. I hope with everything in me that when we cast this vote tonight, that a majority of us will do the right thing and that we will vote the way that we know we should vote; that we will stand with those people who may lose their jobs. Thirty-one percent of the workers in my State—and in other States, it is higher. Thirty-nine percent of the workers in West Virginia stand to lose their jobs, 37 percent of the workers in Alabama, 33 percent of the workers in Georgia. In State after State, you see hard-working moms and dads being threatened.

This isn't right. It is not even an authority that the President has. It is not authority that the Congress has. We shouldn't be doing this. Deep down, we all know that is right. We also know that some of these problems result from the fact that when we fund the government, we have made significant mistakes as a result of the fact we have allowed so many spending decisions to be concentrated in one vote on one bill,